



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Javier Heras (619) 338-2061

Liz Quaranta (619) 338-2360

## **S.D. COUNTY MAN'S DEATH APPEARS LINKED TO RAW OYSTERS**

***Vibrio Bacteria Death the Second This Summer, Fourth in County Since 1999***

For the second time this summer, a San Diego County resident has died from what appears to be a bacterium carried by raw oysters. The County Department of Environmental Health warns people with certain health conditions that raw oysters harvested from the Gulf Coast states of Louisiana, Texas, Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama may be contaminated with this harmful bacterium, *Vibrio vulnificus* (vib-ree-oh vul-nif-ih-cus), which can lead to severe illness and death.

Since 1999, there have been four deaths in San Diego County linked to oysters and *Vibrio* infections, including two this summer. Persons who are immuno-compromised, especially those with liver diseases such as hepatitis, cancer and alcoholic cirrhosis, are at risk for *Vibrio vulnificus* infection when they eat raw or undercooked oysters. All consumers should consider the following tips for preventing *Vibrio vulnificus* infections:

- Do not eat raw oysters or other raw shellfish.
- Avoid cross-contamination of foods with raw seafood and juices from raw seafood. Thoroughly wash your hands or wear a clean pair of gloves when handling raw shellfish.
- Cook shellfish (oysters, clams, mussels) thoroughly:

For shellfish in the shell, either a) boil until the shells open and continue boiling for 5 more minutes, or b) steam until the shells open and then continue cooking for 9 more minutes. Do not eat those shellfish that do not open during cooking. Boil shucked oysters at least 3 minutes, or fry them in oil at least 10 minutes at 375°F. Since 1991, the state has required restaurants and markets to conspicuously display a warning sign about the risk of eating oysters harvested from the Gulf of Mexico. Additional information on *Vibrio vulnificus* is available on the Internet at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

***Editor's note: Both English- and Spanish-speaking staff will be available for interviews.***

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
1255 IMPERIAL AVE. • SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-2422